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HAS ENGLISH A FUTURE TENSE?

When the writer was a schoolboy in the grades he had great difficulty in applying the rules for the use of *shall* and *will*, as found in his grammar. He laid the blame on his faulty English and his imperfect education, but this difficulty did not decrease in the following periods of high school and university training. At first he often avoided these difficult words, for at certain points it gave him pain to follow the prescribed rules. Later he violated this formula wherever it conflicted with his own feeling, for he felt there must be something wrong with rules that one who lives in the atmosphere of good books and learned men cannot follow without a distinct sense of pain. The frequent violation of these grammatical rules in daily life and choice literature makes it plain that the grammarians have at this point imperfectly formulated English usage. The present study is the outgrowth of the feeling that a careful investigation of the current meanings of *shall* and *will* and their historical development is much needed.

Only the barest outlines of an extensive study is presented here in the hope that the vision may not be obscured by useless details and full presentation of materials. In this particular discussion mere fullness of materials has little value, for they are so abundant that there is no book large enough to record even a small part of them. Moreover, diligent scholars have already gathered of them abundantly and have demonstrated great patience and mathematical ability in counting the number of times *shall* and *will* occur in various authors in the various meanings of these words. As the writer does not feel that mathematics are of much value in a difficult piece of work like this, he desires rather to direct the attention to the few characteristic phenomena which clearly mark the development.

The results reached in this treatise rest upon a study of representative English works from the oldest period to the present time. The differences between English usage in England and in America are pointed out and explained. The

two forms of speech are at this point in somewhat different stages of development. Tendencies that have been manifest for many centuries in the language have reached the final stage in their development a little quicker in this country than in England. Only a few representative books are employed in this study, in order that the cited passages may be actually examined in their context. The writer begs his readers to glance over the discussion to see what books are used and then to arrange these books on the table before them for constant reference. These sentences are amputated limbs from living bodies. In marked contrast to physical limbs those limbs will again throb with life when restored to the places from which they were taken. It is a delicate piece of work we have before us, where we must think and feel, but it's worth all the pain and effort. We shall get an insight into an earnest struggle of over seven hundred years, where the English people with its characteristic dogged persistence has striven for a finer and more accurate expression for its thoughts and feelings that have reference to future action. The successful issue of this long struggle is an eloquent testimony of its active inner life, here as so often elsewhere restless and uneasy until it adjusts its language more perfectly to its thought and feeling. We now turn to the history of this interesting development.

In oldest English as in other Germanic languages there was no special form for the future tense. The present tense served for both a present and a future. The older use of the present for the future is still occasionally found where an adverbial expression of time makes the reference clear: "We sail tomorrow for England." After the Germanic family had separated into different peoples they felt the lack of a distinctive form for the future and this common desire for clearer expression led in the different languages to the creation of a new tense, or more accurately led to the pressing of other forms with similar meaning into service as a future. Among the words employed for this function in all the Germanic languages were *shall* and *will*. In German also *werden* was used. In German *werden* finally gained the ascendancy over the other forms for general use, but the simple present tense

and *will* are still not infrequently employed. The Scandinavian languages still make liberal use of the simple present for the future. They also employ auxiliaries for this purpose, the most common of which are probably *shall* and *will*. The different Scandinavian languages make quite different use of *shall* and *will* just as the Middle English dialects. Swedish like Dutch uses only *shall*, while Danish-Norwegian, like modern literary English, employs both *shall* and *will*. In modern Icelandic *shall* has been replaced by *Mun*, which also occurs occasionally in Middle English dialects. In Scotch English *shall* has been entirely replaced by *will*. In Irish English *will* is often improperly used for *shall*, and *shall*, on the other hand, often improperly employed for *will*. In American *English* both *shall* and *will* are used, but they are at one point, as will be explained below, more finely differentiated than the literary English of England. As American English and the literary English of England are practically identical they are here treated as one, aside from the one point where they differ.

As in English both *will* and *shall* are here employed and are used with different shades of meaning, it is necessary to examine closely the original force of these words. Originally *will* indicated a desire of the subject, while *shall* indicated that an act was due in accordance with the will of someone other than the subject of the verb. The meaning of both of these verbs suggested their use to denote the idea of futurity. It is natural to infer that if one *desires* to do something that the act will soon follow. Likewise it is natural to infer that if an act is due in accordance with the will of another that it will be forthcoming if this foreign will is powerful. This constraining force is usually the will or plan of God, fate, destiny, nature, the force of circumstances, or the will of the speaker. The use of *shall* to indicate the will of the speaker was originally only employed in the second and third persons, and could not be used in the first person, for Germanic *shall* never indicated the will of the subject. Early in Middle English, however, it acquired an extension of force so it could indicate not only the speaker's will with regard to others, but also his decisions and plans with regard to his own

course of future action. Thus such expressions as "He *shall* (*I intend that he shall*) pass the winter here" led to "I *shall* (*intend to*) pass the winter here." The old Germanic meaning in the first person *am to* did not disappear, but was retained alongside of the new meaning: "I cannot yet tell whether I *shall* (*am to* under the circumstances) pass the winter here." The context usually distinguishes the two meanings.

Sometimes even in Old English *shall* and *will* seem to have future force. In Early Middle English they have already in large measure replaced the present tense in future function in all the many dialects that sprang up after the Norman invasion. As each section of the country used its own dialect for literary purposes there was a great difference with regard to the use of *shall* and *will*: "Cumeð to me alle ðe swinkeð mid euele werkes, and ȝeheueȝed bieð mid manikennes sennes, and ic eu *wile* ȝiue reste to ȝeuer saule" ("Vices and Virtues," p. 71, about 1200 A.D.) "Come unto me all you who labor with evil works and are heavily laden with all kinds of sins and I *will* give you rest." "Alle ȝe that traueilen and ben chargid, come to me and Y *schal* fulfille ȝou" (John Purvey, Matth. 11.28, about 1388 A.D.). The one author uses *will* where the other employs *shall*. The difference in date here is not the determining factor. The language in "Vices and Virtues" represents a section further to the South than that found in Purvey's translation. In the North there was a pronounced tendency to use *shall* for the future to the exclusion of *will* as in modern Sweden. The North has had an important influence upon our literary language, but it is fortunate that at this point southern usage has prevailed, and thus preserved to our language the finer differentiation that arose out of the use of the two forms. As the North here in spite of its rich literature has left no lasting impression on present usage it is entirely excluded from our discussion.

The use of *will* and *shall* in future function as we know it today is already in all essential features fixed in "Vices and Virtues." Thus it is quite evident that in this section where both forms were in constant use a gradual differentiation had been going on a long time before the composition of this very

interesting linguistic document. We turn now to a careful examination of the state of things at this early period.

The following sentence throws a bright light upon the meaning of *will* at this time in this region: “ ‘Andswere me nu þu unþesaelie saule,’ he *wile* seggen, ‘Hwat hafst þu swa lange idon on ðare worlde?’ ” (p. 17) “ ‘Answer Me now, thou unhappy soul,’ He *will* say, ‘what hast thou done all this long time in the world?’ ” The *will* here has lost every vestige of its original meaning of desire, for the author does not surely imply in his use of *will* here that God is fond of condemning a poor soul in the day of judgment. Even at this early date the people of the South had decided upon *will* as a clearer form than *shall* for the idea of simple futurity. It seemed to these people that if someone desired to do something the act would certainly soon follow. The idea of certainty became very early associated with *will* and is even common in “V & V.” The example from p. 71 quoted above illustrates this usage. The desire to do the act was felt as the earnest of fulfilment. The precious promises of Christ are usually in Southern biblical literature translated by *will*, not *shall*. On the other hand, the other conception of regarding a future act as due in accordance with the will of the speaker is also found in “V & V”: “Ouer litel þing du ware trewe; ouer michel þing ic ðe *scal* setten” (p. 17) “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I *will* make thee ruler over many things” (Matth. 25.21, King James version, 1611 A.D.). Here the *scal* represents the future act as the will or intention of the speaker, while *will* indicates rather the certainty of fulfilment. The language of the version of 1611 has not replaced the older one. The two points of view are still in active use today and both are useful.

A close study of “V & V” shows clearly that altho *will* and *shall* have the distinctive meanings that mark them today, the latter is much more frequently used than at present. This is not so noticeable where, as in the last example in the preceding paragraph, *shall* indicates the will of the speaker, but becomes apparent, especially in the second and third person, where the future act is represented as the will or plan of someone other than the subject, i. e. as the will or

plan of God: "Of ðesere godes dradnesse springþ ut an oðer godes ȝiue, ðe is swiðe niedful auriche manne de iboreȝen *scal* bien" (p. 63) "From this fear of God springs another of God's gifts, which is very needful to every man who *will* be saved." The *scal* (*is destined to*, in accordance with God's plan) of "V & V," the older point of view, is now replaced by *will*, which points to a future act as an actual result. We prefer today in the second and third person to regard the future act or state as a result rather than as a mere plan. In spite of the steady spread of the newer conception, however, the older view is still much used, especially in the first person: "In the sweet by and by, we *shall* (*are destined to*) meet on that beautiful shore."

The struggles of these two tendencies in the English mind can be clearly traced in the literature of the different periods. Altho the tendency to use *will* to denote simple futurity has steadily spread, it has as yet not even in our own time come into use in England at one particular point. In England *will* can be used freely to denote a future act or state only in the second and third person. In the first person it can be used here only where the future act or state is to be determined by a *free moral agent*: "Starve me, keep me from books and honest people, educate me to love dice, gin and pleasure, and put me on Hounslow Heath with a purse before me, and I *will* (free future act) take it." (Thackeray's "Henry Esmond," Book I, Introduction.) "If you *will* (desire) have me stay now, I *will* (free future act performed for love but against the natural inclination of the subject) (ib. Book I, Chap. IX). But *shall* is used to indicate a future act or state that results in the course of nature or events: "There are signs of the times which make me think that ere long we *shall* (future act resulting from a natural development of things) care as little about King George here and peers temporal and peers spiritual as we do for King Canute or the Druids" (ib. Book III, Chap. V). "Some day when my dear mistress sees my heart, I *shall* (future condition resulting from the natural development of events) be righted" (ib. Book II, Chap. I). In American colloquial speech there is a strong tendency here to use *will*, i. e. we are struggling for an absolute future with-

out any respect to free moral agent or natural law, a future tense which only indicates simple future time, such, as is found in the classical languages: "Doctor Morgan, *will* (future act) I ever get up? (Eggelston's "Circuit Rider," p. 302.) "Patty, I tell you I am wretched and *will* (future condition) be till I die" (ib. p. 290). This new American usage is the felicitous outcome of a long struggle of over seven hundred years. In England this same usage is also found in the second and third person, but the final stage in the development, its use in the first person, has not yet been reached. Some English grammarians, however, speak slightly of this American usage and speak of their own defective arrested development as if it were a mark of superiority. More about this later.

If we take up a copy of the King James version of the Bible (1611 A.D.) we will find an exceedingly large number of cases where in all parts of the English speaking territory we today use *will* instead of the older *shall*. The following example will illustrate this change of usage: "If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him and the Romans *shall* come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11.48). In the revised edition of 1881 the *shall* here has been changed to *will*. The authors of the edition of 1611 and elsewhere usually followed Tyndale's version of 1525. Tyndale here represents the Romans as constrained by circumstances to move against the Jews: "the Romans *shall* (*are to, must*) come." Notice how capricious usage here seems to be. In this same sentence a few words before *shall* we find *will*: "all men *will* believe on him." This thought seemed more certain of becoming an actual fact and hence the author Tyndale felt impelled to use *will*. Let us take a still more typical example: "But I say unto you, That it *shall* (*is to* in accordance with my plan) be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee" (Matt. 11.24). In ordinary conversation we would be inclined to use *will* here as we regard all these many acts as actual future facts rather than as mere plans for acts. Thus in an exceedingly large number of cases we would today prefer *will* to the *shall* of Holy Writ. On the other hand, the use of *shall* and *will* in the Bible of 1611 differs little from that in "V & V." In the latter work the

present is still very often used for the future. Later this present was usually replaced by the form with *will* and in general there is a small increase of the use of *will* elsewhere, but there is no marked change. The increase of the use of *will* continues after 1611 slowly but surely.

There is here at present a very great difference in individuals. Some use *shall* very little indeed. Only the poet has a strong predilection for *shall*, for he prefers visions to simple facts. Hence often in the best prose of our time poetic natures like the seers of old unfold their visions of the future development of things, or visions of the better things destiny has in store for us: "Your peculiar faculties, as I *shall* (*plan to*) direct them, are capable of being so wrought into this enterprise that not one of them need lie idle. Strike hands with me, and from this moment you *shall* (*are to* in the natural course of events) never again feel the languor and vague wretchedness of an indolent or half-occupied man. There may be no aimless beauty in your life; but, in its stead, there *shall* (*is to* in the natural order of things) be strength, courage, immitigable will,—everything that a manly and generous nature should desire! We *shall* (*are destined to*, here a lively confidence that destiny will favor their endeavors) succeed! We *shall have done* (in the end it will become manifest that this course has enabled us to do) our best for this miserable world; and happiness (which never comes but incidentally) *will* (final result) come to us un-awares" (Hawthorne's "Blithedale Romance," Chap. XV). Here again the prosy mind prefers to regard these things as accomplished facts and hence uses *will*. We must not forget, however, that this is only the present aspect of the situation. It was quite different in 1200. Then *will* did not stand out as clearly over against *shall* as it does today. In the first stages of the development *shall* offered the best means of indicating the future, but in the South its original meaning clung to it so tenaciously that in the course of time *will* by losing its original meaning proved to be a better expression for simple futurity. The practical man grasped the fitness of *will* for the plain purposes of actual life, but the poet clung to the older *shall* as he appreciated its concreter force, its

picturesque beauty. Altho *shall* has thus lost some of its former territory in principal propositions, it has still kept its old distinctive meaning there and has become, perhaps, a greater favorite in the subordinate clause than it has ever been. This point will be discussed in detail a little further on.

We often hear a stressed *will*: "Well now—I won't go on (worrying you). Yes, I *will*, unless you kiss me" ("Henry Esmond," Book III, Chap. III). "I never *will* forgive this fellow!" (Hawthorne's "Blithedale Romance," Chap. VII). "I'm all right here, or *will* be pretty soon, I reckon" (W. D. Howells's "A Woman's Reason," Chap. XX). "Look here, Marsh: didn't you promise me you'd stop that?" "Yes," "And *will* you?" (Id., "A Modern Instance," Chap. XIV). If the writer understands the few grammarians who have treated this point, they regard *will* here as an independent verb rather than as an auxiliary and ascribe to it the idea of intention. The writer thinks this a very grave error. In "V & V" we often find a simple present tense in such cases: "ðe richeise ðe *scal* trukien, ic ne truke ðe naure" p. 75) "Riches will forsake you, but I never *will*." The simple present here is the old future form. The context clearly indicates that the idea of futurity is here stressed. The stressing of the future idea occurs a number of times in this book, but not a single time with *will*. This idea is usually expressed by the present tense, but in several instances we find here *wurð*, which corresponds to German *werden*, the usual future tense auxiliary in German: "ðies dai haueð aure ibien mid me and æure ma *wurð*" (p. 117) "This day has ever *beén* with me and always *will* be." The use of the simple present tense here to express the idea of an emphatic future, while elsewhere *will* is employed as an unemphatic future is a common older Germanic usage. Even in modern German the simple present tense is still the regular emphatic future, while the form with *werden* is the regular unemphatic future. The occasional use of stressed *wurð* here indicates the beginnings of a new construction which was destined to become one of the most common and characteristic features of our colloquial speech, namely the use of a stressed auxiliary to emphasize

some particular idea: "he *is* working;" "he *dóes* work;" "he *hás* done it;" "it *isn't* done, but it soon *will* be."

The use of *wurð* in "V & V" here to express the future idea raises the question why this form, which has become so useful in German, was later replaced by *will* in English. The rather rare use of *wurð* shows that it was not a natural word. In 1200 a stressed *will* here would have conveyed another idea. Its original force was still felt. Later as the idea of futurity became more intimately associated with it the unnatural *wurð* was replaced by the natural *will*. The clear idea of futurity which was couched in *wurð* occasionally impressed English minds of this older period, but it did not impress them as strongly as the future force of *will*, which for centuries had been growing strong in English feeling as it gradually crowded out the original meaning of the word. *This crowding out of the older meaning here and in all the other cases discussed above is a great gain rather than a loss, for there are other words that can express the idea of desire, but there is no other verb in the language that can give clear expression to the idea of simple futurity.*

Altho *will* is not used in "V & V" in lively, emphatic statements of future actions, *shall* is freely used in lively statements disclosing plans and resolutions with regard to future actions, for it was originally not a future tense, but an independent verb, which was in constant use long before the creation of a special form for the future: "Ic habbe ifolȝed his iwill eaure to longe; swo ne *scal* ic næure mo eft" (p. 93) "I have followed its (i. e. the body's) will too long; I *shall* never do so again." This usage is still very common: "Then Patty, since you make me choose, I *shall* not give up the Lord even for you" (Eggleston's "Circuit Rider," p. 182). The *shall* is often stressed: "The King! he is no king of mine—he never *sháll* be" (Henry Esmond, Book II, Chap. II). "But I *sháll*, I *sháll* some day be revenged!" (George B. Cable's "The Grandissimes," p. 95, Chap. XIV). As *will* and *shall* have a different meaning they can both be used in the same sentence: "When the king comes back . . . for come back the king *will* and *sháll*" (Henry Esmond, Book III, Chap. IV). Here *will* denotes *certainty* of the result, while

shall indicates a plan or determination to help bring this result about. Here Beatrix first represents the result as certain, and then seeks to render this rather improbable result more probable by the declaration that she will make a little history by bringing back the king herself. The words are well arranged here for this special case, but usually *shall* precedes *will* here, as a plan usually precedes a result: "I *sháll* and *will* do it." On the other hand, *sháll* in lively language often has quite a different meaning, for in accordance with the very common conception that *shall* indicates the constraint of circumstances the issue often in case of difficult circumstances becomes very uncertain and indefinite: "What *sháll* I do?" ("What *ám* I to do? What *cán* I do?") "I don't know what in the world I *sháll* do?"

In comparing the first example in the preceding paragraph with those that follow, it will at once become evident that the meaning of *shall* has not changed in the least since 1200, while *will* on the other is fast losing its original force. Some time before 1200, however, *shall* must have changed its meaning at one point. It originally, as *soll* in modern German, indicated the plan of some one other than the subject, but, as in this first example in the preceding paragraph, it later acquired the additional power of indicating a plan conceived by the subject. Thus it enlarged its meaning and increased its usefulness. It became a sort of an auxiliary, a future tense form. As it appears in "V & V" in a number of instances where *will* by virtue of its original meaning was avoided at this early date it seems almost sure that it was the first distinctive future tense form in English. In the South, however, its original meaning was always so distinctly felt that it never developed into a pure future. In this new field of usefulness *will* gradually became established and English acquired two future tenses instead of one, two future tenses with finely differentiated meaning.

We have heretofore considered *shall* only in connection with *will*. We now desire to make it the special object of study. It has much more color to it than *will*. The latter has only two meanings—its original meaning of desire and its newer force to express simple futurity. Of these the latter

is gradually overshadowing the former. On the other hand, *shall* has a large variety of shades, some of them becoming fainter and fainter, some of them still very vividly felt. All these shades, however, are comprised in one meaning, for *shall* always indicates that an act is due. This act is due (1) in accordance with the will or plan of the speaker; (2) under the constraining pressure of circumstances or in the course of nature or events; (3) in accordance with the will or plan of some one other than the speaker, or the will or plan of God, fate, destiny. Of these different shades the first is the most common and most vividly felt. We now take up each one in turn.

It is very common to use *shall* to indicate the will of the speaker, especially in colloquial language: "He *shall* do it!" "You *shall* do it!" "I *shan't*!" In such short positive utterances the *shall* is often stressed, but in most cases the stress disappears as *shall* is felt as forceful enough: "No man *shall* (*I shall not suffer any man to*) say damned awkward to me" (Henry Esmond, Book I, Chap. XIV). "'You *shall* do no such thing, Mr. Moodie,' said Hollingsworth bluffly" (Hawthorne's "Blithedale Romance," Chap. X). "'I *shall* open to no one,' says the man, shutting the glass window as Frank drew a pistol" (Henry Esmond, Book III, Chap. XIII). "Then Patty, since you make me choose, I *shall* not give up the Lord even for you" (Eggleston's "Circuit Rider," p. 182, Chap. XIX).

Above in the discussion of the use of *will* to express the idea of simple futurity attention was called to the use of *shall* here with a distinctly different shade of meaning. We now desire to return to this important point. As in the above examples, *shall* may often be associated with violent emphasis, boisterous outbursts of feeling, and loud expression of a firm determination to carry out one's will or plan. There is in the very nature and origin of the word *shall* a bit of feeling, and in the course of time it has become charged with emotions of all kinds. The tone of the voice is often so firm that it leaves the impression that the speaker will have his way, but the word in every instance calls attention to the speaker's attitude rather than to the final outcome, the future result.

On the other hand, in *will* the original meaning of desire is quite overshadowed by the newer force of futurity, final arrangement, final outcome. The future act is represented as absolutely certain, the proposed future action is submitted as a finality: "You *will* wait on the Bishop of Rochester early, you *will* bid him bring his coach hither" (Henry Esmond, Book III, Chap. XI). "I *shall* (*intend to*) see you in London before very long, Mohun, when we *will* settle our accounts together" (ib. Book I, Chap. XIV). "'These are new notions,' said the old gentlewoman, shaking her head. 'I *shall* (*am destined to*) never understand them; neither do I wish it.' " "'We *will* cease to speak of them then,' said the artist with a friendlier smile than his last one" (Hawthorne's "House of Seven Gables," Chap. III.) The tone may be quietly firm as in the first example or friendly as in the second. On the other hand, it may be very firm and very impassioned, but even here the basal element is no longer inner decision, passionate temper, excited feeling or subjective emotion of any kind, but rather *conviction* that the proposed future action will be absolutely carried thru: "I *will* be revenged on him, as God's in heaven, I *will*" (H. E. Book I, Chap. XIV). Compare this example with the following one, where *shall* points, not to the final outcome, but to the *determined will* of the speaker: "I would give this right hand off at the wrist to catch Agricola Fusilier where I could work him a curse! But I *sháll*, I *sháll* some day be revenged" (G. W. Cable's "The Grandissimes," p. 95).

Shall often denotes a milder expression of the will of the speaker in the form of a promise: "He *shall* have it," "You *shall* have it." These promises also frequently occur in the first person: "We *shall* take care not much oftener to offend in that particular" (Henry Esmond, Book III, Chap. XIII). "They can't bear it, Miss Phoebe, so be sure to come back." . . . "I suppose, people never feel so much like angels as when they are doing what little good they may. So I *shall* certainly come back" (Hawthorne's "House of Seven Gables," Chap. XIV). It is likewise common in threats: "I *shall* thank (spoken ironically) you when I have the means" (Henry Esmond, Book III, Chap. XI). Also *will* is used in

promises and threats but with clearly differentiated meaning. Here *shall* represents the future act as something resolved upon, as intended, while *will* vividly represents the future act as an absolute certainty. Thus very often in the Bible of Tyndale and the King James translators Christ cheers the spirits of his followers by clothing His most precious promises in the most definite form possible, i. e. in the form with *will*: "I go to prepare a place for you. I *will* come again and receive you even unto myselfe" (Tyndale, John 14.3). In our older Bibles, as explained above, Christ employs *shall* a great deal as he is represented as revealing his intentions to us, but often, as in this example, he employs *will* to represent particular future events as certain. This use of *will* in our Bibles is already clearly foreshadowed in "V & V." Likewise in modern English the *will* of promises and threats represents a future act as certain: "When you need me again I *will* come ever so far" ("Henry Esmond," Book II, Chap. VI). "Fare you well; be sure I *will* (threat expressing certainty of the ultimate accomplishment of revenge) remember you" (ib. Book III, Chap. XI).

In such sentences the original idea of desire is quite overshadowed by the idea of futurity or a future act. Even where there is a decided outburst of feeling the emphasis is not to indicate determination so much as the idea of the absolute certainty of the result: "By G—! my Lord, I *will* not leave you this night" (ib. Book I, Chap. XIV). If we substitute *shall* for *will* in these sentences we can feel distinctly how the thought has been changed, can feel that *shall* indicates determination; i. e. the speaker's point of view, while *will* points to the future, to the ensuing act. For years the writer's attention has been repeatedly drawn to this fine differentiation. It is a pleasure to him to observe the mind at work fashioning for itself clearer forms of expression. So strong is the natural tendency of the mind to speak accurately that it will never cease struggling for more accurate expression and will recognize no higher law in language than fitness and effectiveness. Formal grammatical rules may help a weak or stupid mind, but a vigorous intellect creates new and more accurate forms and less gifted thinkers intuitively accept without a thought

these beautiful creations as they accept without a thought the countless creations of nature with which they are surrounded. Thus our language is growing richer from generation to generation.

Shall is not only employed to denote the will of the speaker but is frequently also used to denote his *plans*: "My boys *shall* (*are to*, according to my plans) first study in this country and then *shall* go abroad." Often the ideas of will and plan may be mingled: "How they *will* (simple future) scold and what a rage they will be in, when I come to take the head of the table! But I give them only a month to be angry; at the end of that time they *shall* (*are to*, in accordance with my carefully laid plans and firm determination to carry them out) love me every one, and so *shall* Lord Arran, and so *shall* all his Grace's Scots vassals and followers in the highlands" (Henry Esmond, Book III, Chap. IV). The speaker can thus unfold his plans concerning someone else, but it is more common for him to speak in the first person of plans in which he himself is the actor: "I *shall* (*am to*, *must* in the natural course of events) come of age in 1709. I *shall* (*I intend to*) go back to Castlewood: I *shall* (*intend to*) live at Castlewood: I *shall* (*intend to*) build up the house. . . . I *shall* (*intend to*) marry early" (Henry Esmond, Book II, Chap. VIII).

This is a common and valuable use of *shall*, but here as elsewhere *will* is also employed, usually with sharply differentiated meaning. *Shall* indicates a plan for a future act, while *will* heralds the future act itself, which without any planning will promptly ensue as a natural outcome of the given circumstances. *Shall* gives expression to the idea of the carefully planned, the premeditated, while *will* expresses the conception of the spontaneous. Thus the well known florists E. G. Hill & Co. of Richmond, Indiana, announce in their catalog of 1913 concerning a new rose novelty of the great French rosarian M. Pernet: "We *shall* send it out in this country simultaneously with M. Pernet." On the other hand, we use *will* almost exclusively and quite persistently in lively conversation where the thoughts of future actions rise spontaneously from within in response to feelings that spring up out of the

given circumstances, be they cheerful or gloomy, gay or serious: "I say, Harry, *I'll* show thee my horses after breakfast, and *we'll* go a bird-netting tonight" ("H. E." Book II, Chap. VII). "Go to Cambridge, boy. *We'll* furnish the dining room and buy the horses another year" (ib. Book I, Chap. IX). "I'll take my fun. *I'll* enjoy for the next three years every possible pleasure. *I'll* sow my wild oats then and marry some quiet, steady Viscountess. Perhaps *I'll* represent the county" (ib. Book III, Chap. L). In this category *will* is usually contracted to *'ll*. This contraction cannot be construed as a reduction of *shall*, for the full form *shall* never occurs here, while the full form *will* is often used as seen by the examples in the next two paragraphs, where the examples all belong to this same general category.

Will is freely used here even where acts are of a very unpleasant nature and will be performed with a heavy heart, which shows that the idea of futurity has triumphed completely over the original conception of desire: "If she wants my life I would give it to her. If she marries another I *will* say, God bless him" (ib. Book II, Chap. XV). "As those mistrust me that ought to love me most, let me leave them; I *will* go, but I *will* go alone. You three can stay and triumph over my unhappiness and I *will* bear it as I have borne it before" (ib. Book III, Chap. X).

Notice the especially frequent use of *will* here in the domain of pure fancy, in a fanciful picture of future events where the thoughts arise spontaneously and capriciously from within: "I am thinking of retiring into the plantations and building myself a wigwam in the woods, and, perhaps, if I want company, suiting myself with a squaw. We *will* send your Ladyship furs over for the winter; and when you are old, we *will* provide you with tobacco" (ib. Book III, Chap. III).

The examples in the three preceding paragraphs are worthy of the most careful study. It will become clear upon reflection that the statement of the English grammarians that *shall*, not *will*, expresses futurity in the first person does not hold. Here as elsewhere *shall* does not approach this idea as closely as *will*. *Shall* represents the speaker as planning in present time for a future act, while *will* breaks the connection

with the present and in lively tone directs our attention to the future. We have here two futures, each with a distinct and useful meaning, the result of a long historical development.

One of the commonest uses of *shall* is to inquire after the *will* of another: "Harry, *shall I (do you want me to)* tell you a secret?" ("H. E." Book I, Chap. XII). "When *shall it (do you want it to)* be?" (W. D. Howells's "A Modern Instance," Chap. XIX). Also in stressed form: "*Sháll I (do you really want me to) do it?*"

Sometimes *shall* is used to inquire after the *plan* of another: "*Shall you (are you to, do you intend to)* put in (your newspaper report) about those people coming to see our camp? . . . *Shall you put that Montreal woman in?*" ("A Modern Instance," Chap. XIV). This usage is very much less common today than formerly. We now usually employ *are you going to* here.

An act is often due under the pressure of other acts or circumstances, or in the natural course of events: "I was but two years old then, but take forty-six from ninety, and how old *shall I (am I to, must I)* be?" ("H. E." Chap. I). "I fear we *shall (are to, must)* have to call you unreasonable" (G. W. Cable's "The Grandissimes," p. 14, Chap. V). "How *shall I (am I to, can I)* show my gratitude to you?" ("H. E." Book III, Chap. X). "Who *shall (is to, is able to, can)* say, how far sympathy reaches? (ib. Book III, Chap. 7), "Who *shall (is to, ought to, is the proper one to)* take the news to her?" (ib. Book I, Chap. XIV). It is especially common to indicate the course of nature and events: "These rapping spirits that little Phoebe told us of the other day, what are these but the messengers of the spiritual world knocking at the door of substance? And it *shall (is to)* be flung wide open!" ("House of Seven Gables," Chap. XVII). "And God will not let you do the thing you meditate!" "We *shall (are to, in due course of time)* see," said the judge unmoved" (ib. Chap. XV). "Soon *shall (is to, in the course of nature)* the winter's foil be here; soon *shall (are to)* these icy ligatures unbind and melt—A little while and air, soil, wave, suffused *shall (are to)* be in softness, bloom, and

growth" (Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," "Sands at Seventy"). This last author is a man of visions, who sees the great possibilities of life. His book literally teems with *shall's*, even in the third person where this form is here little used in plain prose.

In colloquial language *shall* is here common only in the first person: "Yes, *we shall* (*we are to, our train is to*) soon be at Pittsburg" ("A Modern Instance," Chap. XXXVIII). Altho, as can be seen by the examples in the preceding paragraph, *shall* is frequently found in poetic language in all persons it is in recent literature avoided in the second and third person on account of the ambiguity that usually arises. Thus if we put the sentence from "A Modern Instance" into the third person—"They *shall* soon be in Pittsburg"—it would quite generally be interpreted as equal to: "I intend that they shall soon be in Pittsburg." The use of *shall* to indicate the will of the speaker has in modern English become the most common one, so that we naturally give it this meaning when we hear it in the second or third person. This modern usage is the basis of the famous rule that *shall* is used in the first person and *will* in the second and third. It is a very unfortunate rule, for it does not apply at all to the very large category discussed about, i. e. the use of *shall* and *will* to indicate the plan or will of the speaker, where both *shall* and *will* with differentiated meanings are used with equal freedom in all three persons.

Thus the use of *shall* to indicate the future idea where there is a reference to a constraint of circumstances or the natural course of events has been gradually replaced in the second and third person by the use of *will*. The modern trend is to crowd *shall* here also out of the first person. This tendency is a perfectly natural one, for the use of *shall* here was originally only a rough attempt at expressing the future idea. It was gradually discovered that *shall* had other, much stronger meanings, so that it was not a fit form for the expression of the future idea. As *will* gradually acquired this simple future force *shall* began to be felt as an inferior form for this purpose and slowly lost ground. Altho the original force of *shall* to indicate the constraint of circumstances or

the natural course of events still appeals to the poetic nature it has lost favor with the plain practical mind, which demands a form that will express facts rather than pictures and will be perfectly clear. The ambiguity of *shall*, altho not so great in the first person as in the second and third, is nevertheless so marked in American English that the tendency to replace it here by *will* is constantly growing stronger. Notice the various meanings of *shall* here in the following examples: "We may rest certain that our friends of today will not be our friends of a few years hence; but if we keep one of them, it will probably be at the expense of others, and most probably we *shall* (*are to*, in the natural course of events) keep none ("Blithedale Romance," Chap. IX). "Well, Doctor Frowenfeld, I hope to meet you soon again." "Indeed, I thank you sir, and hope we *shall* (*are destined to*)" ("The Grandis-simes," p. 49). "If you do not cease your disturbance I *shall* (*am to, must*, constrained by circumstances) be obliged to vindicate the majesty of the law by ordering the constable to arrest you" ("Circuit Rider," p. 224). "I can't bear that life and *shall* (decision, will of speaker) leave it." ("H. E." Book III,). "But I *sháll*, I *sháll* some day be revenged" (T. G. p. 95). "'I certainly *shall* (lively confident utterance) entertain no manner of apprehension with my father at hand,' said Alice with maidenly dignity" ("T. H. of S. G." Chap. XIII). "'I *shall* (sharp decisive utterance) not bandy words with you,' observed the foreign-bred Mr. Pyncheon with haughty composure." "I *shall* (promise) say nothing to anyone else" ("T. G. "). "*Shall I* (*do you want me to*) go on, sir?" ("H. E." Book I, Chap. VI). "'Tis arranged thus: We *shall* (*intend to*, plan of speaker) go to the theater in Duke Street, where we *shall* (plan of speaker) meet Mohun, and then we *shall* go sup at the 'Rose' " (ib. Book I, Chap XIV).

A careful study of these examples should make it plain that *shall* is here too much charged with thought and feeling to serve as a form to express in a plain objective manner the idea of a simple future act or state. In earlier periods *shall* was used for this purpose, as a crude first attempt to express this idea. England still uses it, but in America the feeling is quite

general that *will*, which is used for this purpose in the second and third person, should also be used in the first person: "Doctor Morgan, tell me the truth? *Will* (future act) I ever get up?" ("Circuit Rider," p. 302). "I 'low *we'll* (contraction of *will*) have the fever in the bottoms this year" (ib. p. 6). "O Morton, I am oppressed with responsibility! I *will* (future state) be glad when God shall say, It is enough" (ib. p. 292). Likewise in Canadian English: "What do you propose?" "Organizing a little congregation here in Black Rock." "How many *will you* (for European English *shall you*, i. e. *are you to*) get?" "Don't know." "'Pretty hopeless business,' I said" (Ralph Connor's "Black Rock," p. 132). "A dozen men in Black Rock with some real grip of Him would make things go. *We'll* get them too. I believe in my soul *we'll* get them" (ib. p. 133). "All right, Slavin; *we'll* perhaps understand each other better after this" (ib. p. 131).

These simple sentences aptly illustrate colloquial language among educated and uneducated Americans. Such utterances are not ugly violations of a good rule, but the natural continuation of a development that has been going on for centuries. He who wants to know how well adapted this colloquial form is to literary use, let him read many times the following beautiful passage from Chapter XVI of Hawthorne's "Blithedale Romance": "It (i. e. the heart) incessantly remonstrates, tho most of the time, in a bass-note, which you do not separately distinguish; but now and then with a sharp cry, importunate to be heard, and resolute to claim belief: 'Things are not as they were!' it keeps saying, 'you (i. e. the understanding, which tries to persuade itself that Zenobia and Priscilla's coolness is meaningless and does not portend the loss of their friendship) *shall not* (*are not destined to, cannot in the very nature of things*) impose upon me! I *will* (inevitable future state) never be quiet! I *will* (inevitable future activity) throb painfully! I *will* be heavy and desolate and shiver with cold! For I, your deep heart, know when to be miserable as once I knew when to be happy! All is changed for us! You are beloved no more!' "

The American feeling here is that *shall* with its general

indefinite meaning *is to in the course of nature* is too indefinite to express the swift inevitability of the working of nature, that in certain definite cases is clearly manifest. Hence it is quite natural to employ *will* here, which is universally used to express this idea in the second and third person with all verbs and is also similarly used in the first person with verbs indicating a free act of will, where the idea of the absolute certainty of the future act is prominent. The *will* is not only used to express the swift inevitability of the working of certain natural laws, but it is also often employed to indicate the certainty of the outcome of certain events or developments: "When you prove to me that your story is true—and we *will* find some way to prove it, if it *is* true—that amount will be yours at once" (Bret Harte's "A Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready"). While there is thus a strong tendency in lively language to regard a future act as certain and thus use *will* the evident advantages of the vague, indefinite *shall* in the domain of the vague and indefinite are still vividly felt in American English, even in colloquial speech where *will* is most strongly entrenched: "I'm bad enough, God knows, and I'm afraid I *shall* find my way to hell some day" ("Circuit Rider," p. 323). The result of the American development is not the destruction of older, better usage, but the retention of it where its indefinite meaning is appropriate, and its replacement by *will* only for the sake of greater accuracy of expression. Thus this result is a finer differentiation of meaning—the goal of all higher linguistic development. This must not be confounded with the development in Irish and Scotch dialect, where the valuable distinctive meanings of *shall* have been lost—a most unfortunate result indicative of less accurate thought and feeling.

This defense of American English is based upon the facts of the language and will influence unprejudiced scientific minds, but it will not shake the faith of many who believe implicitly in the inviolability of grammatical laws, which are a formulation of older usage and hence particularly revered. Of these laws this one concerning the use of *shall* and *will* is the most sacred. Recently in a widely read monthly a lady earnestly warned young women to beware of the ugly common use of

will in the first person. Many thousands are teaching and practicing this sacred commandment. In all ages the things of long ago, hallowed by long usage have found zealous and fanatical defenders, who are at the same time foes of the new and unhallowed. These new things of today, however, need no organized defense, for they are born of universal needs and will be supported by the resistless forces of life that created them.

Similar to the use of *shall* to indicate the constraint of circumstances or the natural course of events is the use to denote the will or plan of God, fate, destiny: "*Shall you (are you destined to, or are you to, can you in the natural course of things)* be hungry,—*shall* you lack clothes, or a roof to shelter you,—between this point and the grave?" ("House of S. G." Chap. XV). "*Shall we (we are destined to)* never get rid of this Past?" (ib. Chap. XII). "All the separate action of woman is, ever has been, and always *shall (is destined to)* be false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best and holiest qualities" ("Blithedale Romance," Chap. XIV). This point has also been treated above in connection with the study of *will*, which now often replaces it in colloquial speech, especially in the second and third person. It is now in most cases more natural to use *will* here as the future act is regarded as certain. Where, however, we distinctly feel the future act as belonging to the uncertain and indefinite domain of destiny it is still quite natural to use *shall* here in all three persons.

We have seen above that *shall* has lost ground in the principal proposition. It remained there only when its several distinctive meanings were clearly felt. As *will* gradually developed the idea of simple futurity or inevitability the fitness of this form for plain objective speech gradually became clear to the practical mind and led to the displacement of *shall* in the principal proposition. Only the poet clung to the older conception. In all kinds of temporal, conditional, relative, especially general indefinite relative clauses, and indirect questions, the issue is usually more or less indefinite, uncertain, and the use of *shall* with its indefinite meaning *is to* in accordance with the constraint of circumstances or

the will or plan of God, fate, destiny, is peculiarly fit, with a much more palpable force than the older potential subjunctive. On the other hand, the common meaning of will, determination, plan found in *shall* made it peculiarly appropriate after verbs of demanding, decreeing, proposing, resolving, planning, arranging, etc. Here it corresponds closely to the older optative subjunctive. It has, however, absolutely no historic connection with the older subjunctive, for it cannot at all be used with past tenses and can only be employed where there is some future force. It is thus a survival of the older universal usage. As *shall* gradually disappeared from the principal proposition by reason of the feeling for the greater fitness of *will* there, it was retained in the subordinate clause because of its eminent fitness for use here. Its fitness becomes more obvious when we remember that the subjunctive is identical with the indicative in the plural and hence in a very large number of cases is absolutely useless. Its fitness has been fully appreciated, for it is in the future sphere much more widely used than the older subjunctive.

This use of *shall* in subordinate clauses is so common that only a few examples will suffice: in temporal clause: "When our pastoral *shall* be quite played out, Priscilla, my worldly wisdom may stand you in good stead" ("Blithedale Romance," Chap. IX). "And you will look with a knowing eye at oxen and feel of the hogs and give a guess how much they will weigh after you *shall* have stuck and dressed them" (ib. Chap. VIII). "General Stead said: 'I am of the opinion that under the law the officers now in office must hold until the general assembly *shall* in the manner prescribed by the constitution declare who are elected as their successors'" ("Chicago Tribune," Jan. 18, 1913). Conditional clause: "If ever the time *shall* come when government by dynamite shall be attempted," etc. ("Chicago Post," Jan. 6, 1913). "He is in no danger of death unless he *shall* be persecuted to death" ("House of the Seven Gables," Chap. XV). Relative clause: "I will send a copy of this record to him or her who *shall* first set me right about this column and its locality" (O. W. Holmes "Autocrat," p. 330). Likewise in a general, indefinite relative clause: "Heaven help her husband, who-

ever he *shall* be" ("H. E." Book III, Chap. III). Indirect question: "I am not yet sure what *shall* be done" (Ralph Connor's "Black Rock," p. 39). This same indefinite potential force is also found in the subject clause: "It is a matter of life and death to another that I *shall* go. It is a matter of life and death to another that it *shall* not be known that I went" (Eggleston's "Circuit Rider," p. 283, Chap. XXIX). To denote an expression of will: "One of the most revolutionary changes in the rules urged by the Progressive leaders provides that committees *shall* be named," etc. ("Chicago Evening Post," Jan. 6, 1913). "The Progressives demand that this committee *shall* be," etc. (ib.). Clause of result: "Will Judge Pyncheon above all make due apologies to that company of honorable friends and satisfy them that his absence from the festive board was unavoidable, and so fully retrieve himself in their good opinion that he *shall* yet be Governor of Massachusetts?" ("T. H. of S. G.," XVIII). Purpose clause: "I will make a song that there *shall* be comity by day and by night between all the States" (Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," "Starting from Paumanok").

We have taken a great deal of time and space to say a very little. It is very difficult to explain the simple self-evident things which without the slightest premeditation we say a thousand times a day. The little words *shall* and *will* convey to us as accurately as could be indicated by a delicate scientific instrument the finest shades of thought and feeling, and yet when we try to grasp these meanings analytically they become very elusive. It takes a good deal of fine historical and psychological knowledge to reveal all the processes. Our grammarians have gone to work too mechanically and have failed. The better course is to recognize the great simplicity and the unerring accuracy of natural feeling here and not try in elementary books to analyze these intricate processes. The child knows these things much better than the thousands of inexperienced teachers who try to teach them, for to the former speech is related to thought and feeling, while to the latter unfortunately speech has become a mechanism regulated by little formulas. If something must be said on this subject it will suffice to say that *will* sometimes still retains its

original meaning of desire, but is now more commonly employed to denote simple futurity, while *shall* indicates the will or plan of the speaker, the will or plan of God or destiny, or the natural course of events. The less said the better, for the whole question is wonderfully simple to the child. The English people has worked out these fine shades independently of the grammarian and his help will not be necessary to preserve them. Some day when our school-teachers shall have learned to penetrate into the spirit of their native language the grammar recitation will be the bright spot in the children's daily experience. The teacher will unfold to them the thrilling story of the English people's long and constant struggle to create a full and accurate expression for its inner life.

GEORGE O. CURME.

Northwestern University.